



SWEDEN

Not NATO member



Defence share in GDP

2017

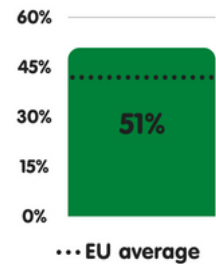


PESCO projects

Participant



Trust in EU



What does the country fear?

Sweden views the deterioration of the rules-based international order as the greatest threat to its security, while also perceiving cyber attacks and external meddling in domestic politics as creating significant risks. Stockholm views all these threats as having grown in the past decade – particularly the deterioration of the rules-based international order, which it was not concerned about in 2008. Sweden expects that, by 2028, its greatest concerns will be cyber attacks and the deterioration of the order. In light of this, there is some debate in Sweden about whether its strategic posture is appropriate to the current security environment. Sweden abandoned military service in 2009, before partially reinstating it in 2015. Sweden feels vulnerable to a range of threats, especially cyber attacks, disruptions in the energy supply, and military attacks on its territory. The country believes itself most resilient against economic instability.

Who does the country fear?

Sweden perceives Russia, followed by jihadists, as the most threatening actors it faces. The issue of whether joining NATO would mitigate these threats divides Sweden’s political parties. All of them worry that Moscow will exploit EU vulnerabilities to cyber attacks, information warfare, and diplomatic division. But they differ in their conclusions on how NATO membership would affect European security. While the centre-right opposition wants to join NATO, the ruling Social Democrats and Green Party, along with the Left Party and the Sweden Democrats, oppose the move.

Essential security partners

Sweden’s four key security partners within the EU are Finland, Germany, Denmark, and the United Kingdom. Sweden shares Finland’s threat perceptions on Moscow, and engages in close security cooperation with the country; has a similar strategic culture to Germany, with which it recently signed a letter of intent on increasing security cooperation; shares Denmark’s threat perceptions on issues such as cyber attacks and hybrid warfare; and engages in extensive intelligence cooperation with the UK, having recently joined the country’s Joint Expeditionary Force. Stockholm believes that Brexit could have negative security implications, but could also improve EU security and defence cooperation. Sweden also sees the United States as a vital security partner, and sees increased investment in defence capacity as an important way to strengthen the countries’ relationship. Sweden is an active contributor to NATO-led missions, such as those in the Balkans, Afghanistan, and Libya.

The EU as a security actor

As Sweden is not a member of NATO, the European Union’s Article 42.7 on collective defence is especially important to the country. Stockholm fully supports efforts to increase the EU’s security and defence capacity, particularly in civilian crisis management. Sweden primarily joined PESCO to prevent the initiative from becoming exclusive and potentially divisive for member states. It sees PESCO as potentially filling major gaps in European defence capacity, but not as revolutionary for EU security and defence cooperation. Sweden’s limited participation in PESCO comes at a low cost.